4 LEGACIES OF EMPIRE: COMMONWEALTH IMMIGRATION AND THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF IDENTITY POLITICS DIVIDES

Introduction

Political conflicts triggered by native hostility to newcomers are nothing new in British politics. As we saw in Chapter 2 with the defensive reactions of 1930s Banburians to migrants moving from elsewhere in Britain to work in their town, the activation of ethnocentrism does not even require immigrants to cross national borders. But while any influx of outsiders can trigger ethnocentric reactions, the deepest divides and most lasting conflicts have come over international immigration and the rising ethnic and racial diversity that successive waves of it have generated. This chapter tells the story of why this is so and how it came to be. We examine the first wave of sustained non-white migration to Britain from the 1950s to the 1970s, showing how conflicts over this migration became mobilised into politics. The choices taken during this wave of migration set up an identity politics alignment in the electorate, and this alignment in turn has shaped more recent identity politics conflicts over immigration. The dilemma facing this earlier generation of politicians will be familiar to those following the contemporary migration debate – policymakers agreed a liberal policy regime and unwittingly triggered an influx of migrants, then faced pressure to restrict this inflow when it activated ethnocentric hostility

among the white majority, while at the same time a pressing need emerged to protect the new migrant communities from this ethnocentric hostility. The choices politicians made in response to these conflicting demands had a lasting impact, aligning identity conservative voters with the Conservative Party, which came to be seen as more willing to control the 'threat' from immigration, and aligning identity liberal voters with the Labour Party, which came to be seen as more willing to protect the rights of migrants and minorities.

There are three parts to the story, which parallel and fore-shadow events in the decade leading up to the EU Referendum of 2016. The first is a large and persistent elite–mass gap on immigration, which led more liberal and cosmopolitan political elites to introduce reforms granting extensive migration rights to a large population in order to improve Britain's international position, while underestimating the scale and intensity of public hostility this would trigger. In the first wave of immigration, the goal was to secure Britain's place at the heart of a post-Imperial community of nations – the Commonwealth – and open borders between Commonwealth members was seen either as a valuable goal in itself,[1] or as an acceptable price to pay to secure lasting political influence within this community. More than fifty years later, another identity liberal-dominated political elite came to very similar conclusions when considering whether to fully open Britain's borders to migrants from the post-Communist countries acceding to the EU. In both cases, the unintended consequence of these decisions was a surge in migration as far more people opted to exercise newly granted free movement rights than political elites had anticipated, activating ethnocentric hostilities in the native electorate who perceived the new migrants as a threatening out-group.

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[1] Emigration from Britain to Commonwealth members such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada was substantial in the early post-war years, and governments saw British emigrants as another mechanism for maintaining close and strong UK–Commonwealth links. The Commonwealth was also much more important for the British economy and British trade – and Europe much less so – in the early post-war years (see Edgerton 2018).

The second parallel between the two waves is that the ethnocentric sentiments activated by migration were successfully mobilised by political actors arguing for more radical migration restriction policies. As public opposition to immigration grew, the policy response from elites constrained by a commitment to an open borders principle and unwilling to alienate migrant-sending countries was piecemeal and slow in coming. Substantial migration continued for a number of years, and public concern remained high, but without an effective mainstream political outlet, until a new political actor mobilised ethnocentric voters behind more radical proposals and transformed the political situation. The appearance of a credible electoral threat broke the logjam, pushing one of the main political parties to embrace more radical migration restrictions, breaking with their earlier commitment to uphold open borders principles. In the 2010s, this was the story of UKIP's rise, as identity conservatives frustrated with successive governments' inability to control migration turned to the radical right and eventually forced the Conservatives to offer an option to exit Britain's open border arrangements with the EU via a referendum on Brexit. The story played out in a similar way in the 1960s as identity conservative voters, frustrated with repeated governments' unwillingness to control Commonwealth migration, turned to Enoch Powell's radical right insurgency, which eventually forced the Conservatives to concede radical reforms which effectively ended the migration rights of most Commonwealth citizens.

The final similarity between the two periods is that both also involved a substantial counter-mobilisation by identity liberals opposed to the rise of radical right actors and seeking to protect migrant minorities from ethnocentric intolerance. In the first wave, committed identity liberals within the Labour Party were pivotal in pushing through the first race relations legislation – writing anti-racism norms into British law, and laying the groundwork for a longer-run project of re-imagining Britain as a multicultural society where minority cultures are celebrated and minority rights protected. This, too, is already finding its

echo in the Brexitland political cycle, with a shift towards pro-migration attitudes since 2016,[2] and the emergence of activist groups devoted to protecting the rights of EU migrants and fighting the oppressive 'hostile environment' rules applied to migrants by the Home Office since the mid-2010s. While these movements have not, as yet, had the kind of lasting legislative impact that the proponents of race relations legislation had in the 1960s, they have already shifted the balance of power on migration by activating and politically mobilising pro-migration sentiments among the much larger contemporary identity liberal electorate.

The origins of the first wave: the entanglement of citizenship and Empire

The story of the first wave begins with the British Nationality Act (BNA 1948) of 1948, one of the most liberal pieces of citizenship and migration legislation passed by a Western democracy. The BNA 1948 defined British citizenship for the first time[3] and did so in very expansive terms. A common citizenship with identical rights was conferred on all residents of Britain and of the current and former territories of the British Empire, including the vast and populous Indian subcontinent.[4] Eight hundred million people across the globe acquired full British citizenship rights, including the right to settle and work in Britain, and to

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[2] Sobolewska and Ford (2019); Schwartz et al. (2020); Ford (2018b; 2019a).

[3] Before the Act, residents of the UK, the Commonwealth Dominions and the British colonies shared a common status of 'British subject'. However, in 1947, Canada passed legislation creating a separate Canadian citizenship, forcing the British government and the governments of other independent Commonwealth members such as Australia and New Zealand to define their citizenship and its relationship to the broader Commonwealth. For a detailed account of the legislative process and the debates which preceded it see chapter 2 in Hansen (2000).

[4] The bill defined two categories of citizenship: 'Citizenship of the UK and Colonies' and 'Citizenship of Independent Commonwealth Countries', but the rights conferred by these categories were identical (Hansen 2000: 46). There was also a separate category, also with full migration and political rights, for residents of the Irish Republic.

participate in British mainland politics from the moment they arrived.[5]

Given this remarkable openness, it is rather surprising that facilitating mass migration was not a goal, or even an expected effect, of the BNA 1948 legislation. Instead, its Parliamentary authors aimed to cement Britain's political status at the heart of an open and integrated Commonwealth of former imperial states. While close links with the former Empire were seen as essential to Britain's future prosperity and influence, mass immigration was not expected to be part of that equation, nor were all parts of the former Empire seen as equally important. The emphasis of the political elite was on maintaining close relations with the white colonial settler societies of the 'Old Commonwealth' – Canada, Australia and New Zealand.[6] In the decades prior to the BNA, the primary circulation of people within the Empire had been between Britain and these countries, and the BNA 1948 aimed to protect this system by confirming unrestricted rights to migrate to and from Britain and the Commonwealth. It was 'a fundamentally backward-looking document reaffirming the status quo as it had existed for decades'.[7] The desire was to preserve economic and political connections between Britain and the diverse global network of territories it had developed over centuries under the aegis of Empire in a new post-Imperial era of independent Commonwealth states.

It was not possible to preserve this right for the white settler states of the 'Old Commonwealth' while excluding the black and Asian majority Commonwealth states without writing an explicit 'colour bar' into the legislation, something identity liberal politicians, crafting legislation just years after a world war against a racist dictatorship, were unwilling to consider. British legislators therefore conferred a single, undifferentiated set of citizenship rights on all residents of Imperial

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[5] This right, unlike the others, was never restricted in subsequent legislation, with important implications for electoral politics.
[6] Cannadine (2017: ch. 10).   [7] Hansen (2000: 35).

and Commonwealth territories. The policymakers who thus opened up the opportunity to migrate to Britain to hundreds of millions of people in Caribbean, Asian and African territories did not, however, give much consideration to what might happen if large numbers chose to exercise this right. The issue of migration to Britain from the current and former Imperial colonies was not mentioned once in the extensive committee and Parliamentary debates on the BNA.[8] Yet, as labour shortages developed in Britain's post-war economy, rapidly expanding numbers of black and Asian Commonwealth citizens began to exercise their rights, moving to Britain in search of better work and higher incomes. The first inflows came from the West Indies, beginning with the arrival of the famous *Empire Windrush* with hundreds of Jamaican migrants seeking work, just months after the passage of the 1948 Act.[9] As the 1950s progressed, the numbers grew and migration diversified, with flows from the West Indies augmented by arrivals from India and Pakistan.[10]

Public opposition to migration in the first wave

As Commonwealth migration flows increased, ethnocentric sentiments in the electorate were activated and strong public opposition began to manifest itself. Polling is sparse in this period, but the evidence available underscores that public opposition to 'coloured' migration, as it was then called, was intense and widespread from the outset (see Figure 4.1). Close to 90 per cent of poll respondents supported strong restrictions on

[8] Hansen (2000: 49).
[9] There are a number of popular, personal and oral history accounts of this early migration, and the reactions faced by the first Commonwealth migrants, for example, Phillips and Phillips (2009); Hall (2018); Matthews (2018); Wills (2018).
[10] In the early years after India and Pakistan became independent, their governments (under pressure from the British government) restricted their citizens' access to British passports, reducing migration flows by preventing their own citizens from exercising their Commonwealth citizenship rights. This practice ceased after an Indian Supreme Court ruling against it in 1960 (Hansen 2000: ch. 4 and p. 97).
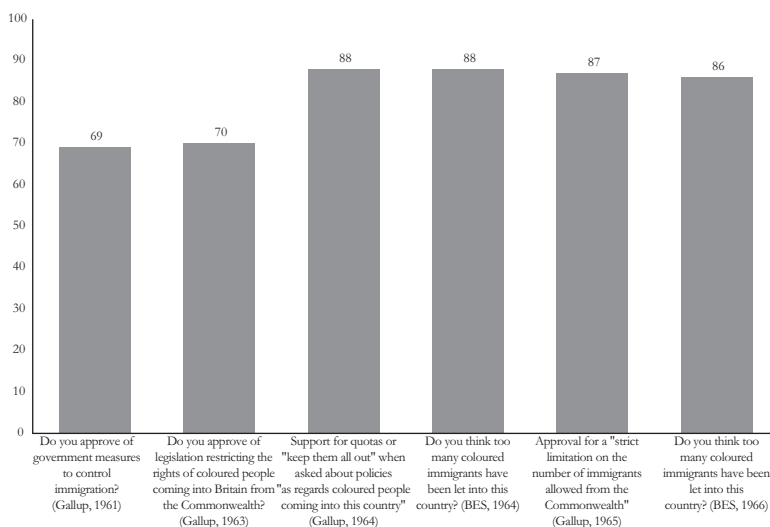
Figure 4.1 Opposition to immigration and support for migration restrictions, 1961–6 (percentages)

Source: Archive of historical immigration polling compiled by Professor Will Jennings.

Commonwealth or 'coloured' migration, and around 70 per cent expressed approval of the first restrictive legislation passed by the Conservatives in 1962. The share of the public who supported the BNA 1948 policy of full Commonwealth migration rights typically sat at around 10 per cent, while substantial parts of the public were supportive of very restrictive measures such as banning family reunion migration[11] or state-sponsored

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[11] Pollsters only began to ask about restrictions on family reunion migration after Enoch Powell began campaigning for such restrictions, so public support for the policy may be entangled with views of Powell. Forty-three per cent of voters supported restrictions on family migration in 1968 polling, with 50 per cent opposed. When NOP ran more detailed polling on specific kinds of family members, they found large majorities supported allowing unrestricted migration of wives and dependent children, while equally large majorities opposed unrestricted migration of all other relatives (including adult children). Later polling on family migration by the British Social Attitudes survey between 1984 and 1996 found that majorities favoured 'stricter control' on the settlement of 'close relatives' in each year the question was asked.

repatriation of settled migrants.[12] This opposition was, from the outset, racially discriminatory – the overwhelming focus of public attention and hostility was migration from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent – indeed 'coloured' migration was the issue pollsters typically asked about, rather than Commonwealth migration in general.[13]

One unusual survey conducted during this period provides a stark illustration of the discriminatory nature of public opposition to immigration. In 1967, Gallup pollsters asked the public identical questions about the benefits and harms from Commonwealth and Irish migration. Flows of migrants from Ireland were at this point as substantial as settlement from the entire Commonwealth combined,[14] and, unlike Commonwealth migration, Irish migration remained unrestricted at the time of the survey, so if public concern was driven by the actual pressures generated by migration then opposition to Irish migrants should be as high as, if not higher than, opposition to Commonwealth migrants. Yet, as Figure 4.2 reveals, Commonwealth migrants attracted much stronger public opposition than Irish migrants. Three in five voters felt Britain had been harmed by the settlement of

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[12] Repatriation is another policy pollsters only began to ask about after Enoch Powell began promoting it, so public support for the policy may, like views of family reunion migration, be entangled with views of Powell. Between 42 and 64 per cent of respondents supported repatriation proposals in polls carried out between 1968 and 1978, and when Gallup asked about the idea again in 1993, it still received support from 43 per cent of respondents (though this later question referred to 'help[ing] migrants who will return to their country of origin', framing the issue as providing support to migrants who have already decided to leave Britain.

[13] It is revealing that the opinion polling companies throughout the period habitually asked questions about 'coloured' migration specifically, seeing no issue with referring to migration in racialised terms like this, and no reason to ask about any other specific categories of migrant. The pollsters were in no doubt where the locus of public concern and political debate lay.

[14] For example, Ireland was the single largest country of birth for foreign-born residents in the 1971 Census, with 709,000 Irish-born residents of Great Britain, compared with 322,000 Indian-born residents, 237,000 born in the Caribbean, 210,000 born in Africa and 140,000 born in Pakistan. There were also 632,000 residents born in Western Europe and 175,000 born in Eastern Europe, two large groups of migrants who were virtually invisible in the migration debates of this period. See Rendell and Salt (2005).
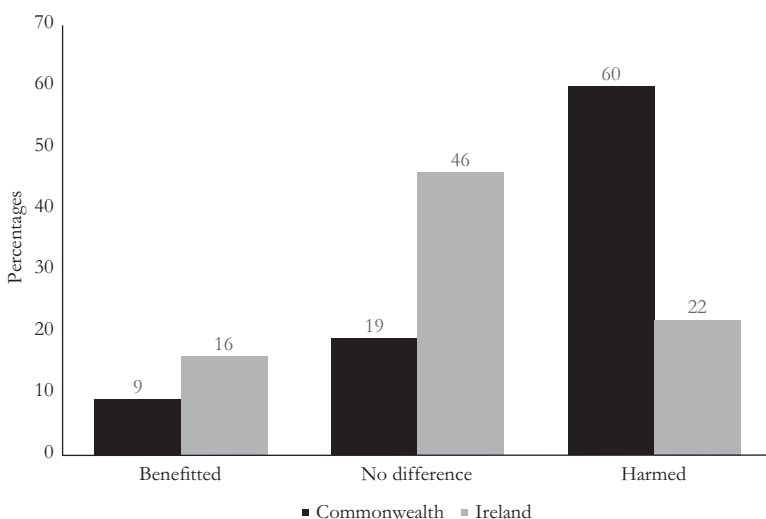
Figure 4.2 'Do you think on the whole this country has benefitted or been harmed through immigrants coming to settle here from the Commonwealth/Ireland?'

Sources: Gallup (1967); Professor Jennings historical polling archive.

Commonwealth migrants, while only a fifth felt that way about the Irish migrant population. Racially different Commonwealth migrants activated ethnocentric hostility in a way that white Irish migrants did not.

This strength of the hostile reaction to Commonwealth migration reflects the demographics of the 1960s British electorate, which was dominated in this period by identity conservatives. White school leavers – the core identity conservative demographic group – formed a large majority of the population. These voters were consistently much more likely to express ethnocentric hostility to 'coloured' migrants, and to support policies which would halt migration to Britain or repatriate already settled migrants, as Table 4.1 below illustrates by showing education divides in various immigration questions. University graduates, who were at a time a tiny minority, were much less

Table 4.1 Education gradients in attitudes to immigration and race among white respondents 1964–84

Educational qualifications	Very or fairly strong opposition to coloured immigration (1964)	Support halt to all immigration or repatriation (1970)	Support repatriation of immigrants (October 1974)	Agree 'government should send coloured immigrants back' (1979)	Oppose racial intermarriage (strongly) (1986)
No qualification	75	70	42	35	57
GCSE/O-level	63	60	36	23	45
A-level	56	47	28	14	40
University degree	33	37	17	9	37

Sources: British Election Studies (1964, 1970, October 1974, 1979); British Social Attitudes (1986).

likely to express hostility to Commonwealth migrants, and large majorities of graduates opposed all the draconian migration restriction policies proposed during this period. The migrants of the first wave faced more intense and widespread racially motivated hostility because Britain in the 1960s and 1970s was a society more dominated by the ethnocentric demographic groups most prone to such hostility.

The elite–mass divide on immigration in the first wave

Political arguments about migration in the first wave, like those today, were seldom a matter of narrow economic costs and benefits, but were a clash of outlooks between more cosmopolitan political elites concerned to maintain Britain's status in the international community and a more ethnocentric electorate opposed to the settlement of outsiders they found threatening. For Britain's post-Imperial elite, the people living in Britain's Commonwealth were part of an ideologically constructed 'us' stretching across the former Imperial territories, a community of interest defined by a common history. Britain was at the centre of a global network, so Britain should have a globalised form of citizenship which crossed continents, knitting together all those with a political and historical bond to the country.

The British public did not share this view – their sense of 'us' was much more narrowly defined, racially and territorially. 'Us' for the British public of the 1950s and 1960s was white British people born and resident in Britain. Migrants from the Caribbean and south Asia were not part of any in-group they recognised, and they saw no reason why people from thousands of miles away should have an unrestricted right to join their national and local communities. This ethnocentric opposition to Commonwealth migrants was for the most part not softened by the economic reality of post-war labour shortages,[15] or the

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[15] Among those who saw Commonwealth migration as a valuable policy response to labour shortages was Enoch Powell, who as Conservative Health

major contribution Commonwealth citizens made to the war effort. This illustrates how immigration debates are chronically prone to activate ethnocentric concerns about groups and group conflict, which cannot be resolved with technocratic claims about economic or foreign policy benefits. In this way, too, arguments during the first wave of migration resembled, and influenced, those during the second wave.

Debates over Commonwealth migration exposed deep divides between the identity liberal minority and the majority not only over the issue of who to let in and on what terms, but also over whether migration was a political priority at all. While liberal university graduates, and much of the policymaking elite, saw the arrival of relatively modest numbers of black and Asian migrants as a trivial matter, large parts of the electorate – in particular identity conservatives – reacted with intense hostility to Commonwealth immigration from the moment it began. While most identity liberal politicians, many of whom had fought Nazi racism in the Second World War, abhorred the use of race or ethnicity to judge migrants, many of their ethnocentric constituents felt just as strongly that racial and ethnic differences were a legitimate basis for restricting migration.

These tensions between identity liberals and conservatives over immigration in the first-wave period divided the parties internally, driving a wedge between the political elites and

Minister in 1963 launched a campaign to recruit trained doctors from overseas to fill the manpower shortages caused by NHS expansion. Some 18,000 of them were recruited from India and Pakistan. Powell praised these doctors, who, he said, 'provide a useful and substantial reinforcement of the staffing of our hospitals and who are an advertisement to the world of British medicine and British hospitals' (Snow and Jones 2011). Powell continued to defend this policy even in his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' anti-immigration speech, separating temporary labour migration from permanent settlement, and denying that the former should be considered immigration at all: 'I stress the words "for settlement". This has nothing to do with the entry of Commonwealth citizens, any more than of aliens, into this country, for the purposes of study or of improving their qualifications, like (for instance) the Commonwealth doctors who, to the advantage of their own countries, have enabled our hospital service to be expanded faster than would otherwise have been possible. They are not, and never have been, immigrants' (Powell 1968).

electorates of both Labour and the Conservatives. Both parties' ruling elites tended to have stronger attachments to the Commonwealth, an intense and widely shared social norm sanctioning racial prejudice and discrimination, and a tendency to see migration and open borders pragmatically in terms of political and economic benefits. The support bases of both parties differed in all these regards – there was little attachment to Empire or Commonwealth amongst the mass electorate, whose primary loyalty was to a narrowly drawn sense of national identity defined by ancestry and birth. Social norms sanctioning expressions of racism were weak or absent in this period – as seen, for example, in the widespread and explicit use of discrimination in rental housing ('no dogs, no blacks, no Irish'), and in popular culture – 1970s television sitcoms regularly featured racial stereotypes and insults, which viewers would see as outrageous and unacceptable just a decade or two later.[16] The mass electorate, and the mass membership of both parties,[17] expressed a strong preference for white over non-white migration, with many wanting the latter completely stopped or reversed.

The first evidence of the political power of such ethnocentric sentiments came in the 1964 general election campaign in Smethwick, where the Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker – a prominent campaigner against migration restrictions – lost his seat to an obscure Conservative candidate following a racially charged campaign, featuring leaflets using the slogan 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour'. As the defeated Labour MP left Smethwick town hall after the count, Tory supporters yelled after him: 'Where are your niggers now, Walker?' and 'Take your niggers away!'[18] While there was

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[16] Popular family sitcoms of the late 1960s and 1970s included 'Love Thy Neighbour', where the central premise was the supposedly comic reactions of a racist white man to a black family moving in next door, and 'Curry and Chips', which featured the hugely popular white comedian Spike Milligan performing in blackface and with a heavy accent as a Pakistani migrant (Harrison 2017).
[17] Seyd, Whitely and Parry (1996).   [18] Jeffries (2014).

growing evidence of the disruptive power of this activated ethnocentric hostility, the leadership of both parties remained reluctant to respond to it. Early politicians who explicitly mobilised such concerns, such as Smethwick winner Peter Griffith, were ostracised by their fellow MPs and shunned by the parties' leadership figures.[19] While many MPs in both parties were privately worried about rising public hostility to black and Asian migrants, openly articulating or sympathising with such ethnocentric sentiments was taboo.

The political activation of ethnocentrism: Enoch Powell and 'Rivers of Blood'

The dam finally broke when, for the first time, a prominent member of the Conservative Party elite – Shadow Cabinet member Enoch Powell – broke the taboo and articulated in full the identity-based hostility to migration widely shared in the electorate in the infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968, which used emotive rhetoric and lurid imagery to attack liberal Commonwealth immigration policies:

> *Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre.[20]*

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[19] The response to Griffiths' victory again highlights the very different priorities and values of Britain's identity liberal political elite – he was welcomed to the Commons with a searing indictment by the incoming Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, usually a measured and temperate speaker, who angrily denounced Griffiths' views and averred that Griffiths would 'serve his time as a Parliamentary leper'. Wilson's mark of Cain stuck. Griffiths' persistent refusal to disown an explicitly racist campaign did indeed make him into a Parliamentary leper, as Wilson predicted. He lost his bid for re-election in 1966 and, though he eventually returned to Parliament in 1979, and served another eighteen years as an MP, he was never promoted to a ministerial post.

[20] Powell (1968).

Powell was fully aware that such an open and visceral violation of anti-racism social norms would provoke a strong reaction from his colleagues: 'I can already hear the chorus of execration ... how dare he say such a thing? How dare I stir up trouble and inflame feelings ...?' However, he defended his stance by arguing that the growing opposition of white ethno-centric voters to migration was both legitimate and too import-ant to ignore: 'The answer is that I do not have the right not to do so ... I simply do not have the right to shrug my shoulders and think about something else. What [my constituent] is saying, thousands and hundreds of thousands are saying and thinking ...'[21]

The chorus of execration Powell anticipated was indeed swift to arrive. Conservative leader Edward Heath repudiated Powell's position, sacked him from the Shadow Cabinet, and never spoke to him again.[22] This move was overwhelmingly supported by his senior Shadow Cabinet colleagues – four of whom threatened to resign themselves unless Powell was dismissed. Heath cited the 'racialist tone' of Powell's speech as the reason for his sacking, which he called 'unacceptable from one of the leaders of the Conservative Party' and 'liable to exacerbate racial tensions'. *The Times*, newspaper of record for the British ruling class, denounced Powell's speech as 'evil', calling it 'the first time that a serious British politician has appealed to racial hatred in this direct way in our post-war history'.[23]

The public response was quite different – two-thirds of voters said Heath was wrong to sack Powell, and over 75 per cent said they agreed with his views on immigration.[24] Powell received thousands of letters in support,[25] and overnight became the most widely known Conservative politician after Prime Minister

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[21] Powell (1968).

[22] Hansen (2000: 186). Powell, however, retained the Conservative whip and was therefore able to campaign from the backbenches as a Conservative MP.

[23] *The Times*, Editorial, 22 April 1968.

[24] Schoen (1977: 37). Figures are averages across three and four polls, respectively, conducted in the weeks following the speech,

[25] Esteves (2019).

Heath himself.[26] Polling in the months before the speech already showed a large majority believed controls on immigration were not strict enough, while a substantial minority backed a 'total ban on coloured immigration'. Support for both policies rose in the wake of Powell's intervention (see Figure 4.3). There was also lower, but still widespread, public support for Powell's more controversial and draconian proposals – including banning family reunion and the repatriation of settled migrants.
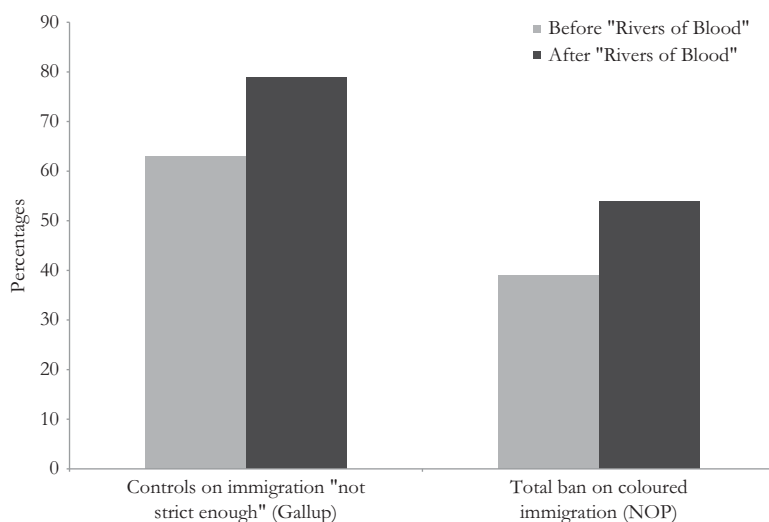

Figure 4.3 Support for Powellite positions on immigration before and after 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968

Source: Jennings, Opinion polls database, 2018.

[26] Schoen (1977: 38). Just 1 per cent of voters named Powell as their preferred choice for next Conservative leader in March 1968, the month before his speech. Immediately after the speech, the figure leapt to 24 per cent, making him the leading choice. Powell remained a front runner in the eyes of the public for many months thereafter, and voters divided evenly between him and Heath when asked which of the two they would prefer as Conservative leader or PM.

Enoch Powell transformed the debate over immigration, mobilising ethnocentric identity conservatives and driving a wedge between liberal anti-racist political elites and the mass electorate. Powell's interventions were also the point at which a lasting divide emerged in the parties' reputations on immigration. Before Powell, the two main parties were seen by voters as rather similar on the issue. New migration restrictions in 1968 had been introduced by the Labour government, and the Conservative leadership – which had distanced themselves from Powell's stances – showed little initial interest in further action. But after 'Rivers of Blood', it was Powell who made the running in the migration debate. Powell continued to sit as a Conservative MP, and his association with the Conservatives led voters to see them as a party favouring strict and racialised immigration control. Powell's strident and hostile language also forced a stronger response from Labour's leadership, pushing the party into stronger defences of ethnic minorities' rights. After Powell's interventions, voters saw a clear divide between the Conservatives as the party of migration restriction and opposition to diversity, and Labour as the party of liberal migration policy and multiculturalism.[27]

We can trace the emergence of this divide in the British Election Study (BES) surveys. In 1964 and 1966, a majority of respondents, when asked which party was more likely to stop immigration, said 'neither', suggesting most voters had noticed the cross-party identity liberal consensus against strict immigration control. This changed in the wake of 'Rivers of Blood'. Nearly six out of ten respondents to the 1970 British Election Study saw the Conservatives as more likely to halt immigration, compared with just 4 per cent who named Labour.[28] Indeed,

[27] One of the most widely used definitions of multiculturalism was set out by a senior Labour politician, Roy Jenkins, in a speech to the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants in 1966, two years before Powell's campaigning on immigration began: 'not . . . a flattening process of assimilation but . . . equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance'.

[28] This came despite Labour having passed just two years earlier one of the most controversial restrictive immigration reforms of the entire first wave, when the Labour government unilaterally revoked the migration rights of hundreds
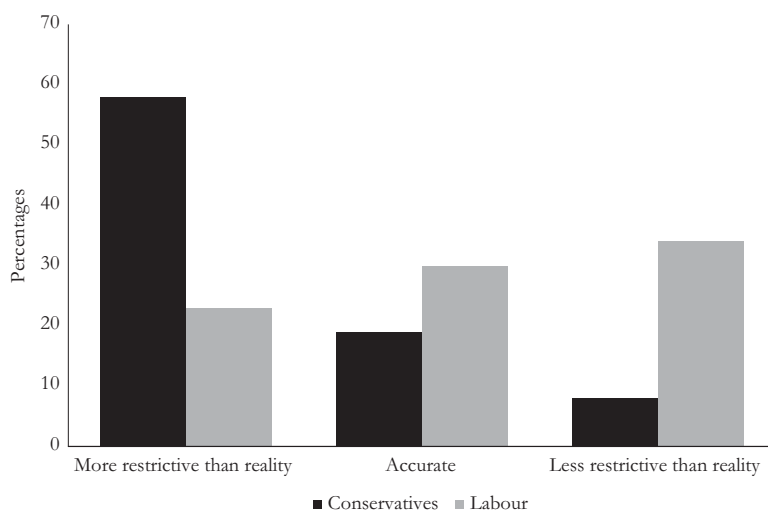
Figure 4.4 Voters' perceptions of Conservative and Labour immigration policies, 1970

Source: British Election Study 1970. The study offered respondents four options on migration policy: repatriation of settled migrants and stopping all existing migration were coded 'more restrictive than reality' for both parties; allow immediate family and a few skilled workers was coded as 'accurate' for both parties as it is the closest analogue to the proposals both made; while allowing new workers and families free entry were coded as 'less restrictive than reality' for both parties as both intended to keep in place the strict quotas on labour migration imposed since the mid-1960s, while the Conservatives proposed further restrictions on top of this.

thanks to Powell, voters in 1970 saw the Conservatives' immigration policy as a great deal more restrictive than it actually was. This is illustrated in Figure 4.4, which shows the share of voters whose perceptions about the parties' immigration policies were more restrictive than reality, accurate or less restrictive than reality. Some 58 per cent of voters in 1970 inaccurately

of thousands of ethnic south Asians living in Kenya, who only had Commonwealth citizenship, and were hence rendered stateless for forty years, until their rights were restored by the Labour government of Gordon Brown (see Hansen 2000: ch. 7).

claimed the Conservatives' policy was either to totally halt further immigration (36 per cent) or to repatriate settled migrants (22 per cent), whereas only a fifth correctly identified that Conservative policy was to 'allow immediate families and a few skilled workers'. As the share of voters who personally supported such restrictive policies was higher still (50 per cent backed a total halt, 20 per cent backed repatriation), these misperceptions, driven by Powell's rhetoric, were electorally valuable, enabling the Conservatives to attract support from ethnocentric identity conservatives. Indeed, the party was able to have its cake and eat it on immigration: Powell's widely reported polemics on the issue signalled a restrictive stance on migration, but by holding him at arm's length the party leadership could avoid fully committing itself to a strongly anti-immigration stance that would violate elite anti-racism norms and jeopardise relations with the Commonwealth. The balancing act worked,[29] bringing big gains for the Conservatives among the most ethnocentric and pro-Powell voters,[30] despite the party leadership's official disapproval of Powell and continued opposition to his most draconian proposals.

While the Conservative leadership was initially uncomfortable with Powell's high profile and fiery rhetoric, they were unable to resist the pressure for migration restriction produced by his campaigns. The party pledged to introduce new immigration restrictions during the 1970 election campaign, and Heath fulfilled this pledge within a year of taking office with the passage of the 1971 Immigration Act (IA 1971). This maintained the concept of Commonwealth citizenship, but stripped it of practical meaning by creating two classes of Commonwealth

[29] The most comprehensive analysis, by Donley Studlar, concluded that 'the Conservatives gained a net of 6.7% of the vote on the basis of the immigration issue alone' in 1970 (Studlar 1978). One of the authors re-analysed the British Election Study data from this period and came to similar conclusions (Ford 2019a).

[30] Support for Powell was heavily concentrated among voters with the lowest levels of formal education and among those expressing the strongest ethnocentric hostility to 'coloured immigrants' (Studlar 1978: 223–30).

citizens: 'patrial' citizens, with an unrestricted right to abode in Britain; and 'non-patrial' citizens, who had no such automatic right. Patriality was awarded to all those with a British-born parent or grandparent, a provision that, in effect, introduced a 'colour bar' while avoiding explicit recognition of race in immigration policy. Patriality ensured continued access to Britain for most white Commonwealth citizens (who typically had at least one British-born grandparent), while excluding most non-white Commonwealth citizens. However, to head off identity liberal criticism of racial discrimination, the Act also awarded 'patrial' status automatically to all Commonwealth citizens who had lived in Britain for more than five years, along with their families. Most already settled Commonwealth migrants of all ethnic origins therefore retained full residence rights, though in practice no effort was made to formally document such rights and thus secure them against future challenge, storing up problems which would emerge decades later in the form of the 'Windrush' scandal.[31]

Heath's 1971 legislation attempted to address the anxieties of identity conservative voters, and ensure their continuing support for the Conservatives, by stripping most black and Asian Commonwealth citizens of their migration rights. However, the legislation failed in its political goal before it was even implemented. On 7 August 1972, Idi Amin's regime in Uganda issued a decree giving tens of thousands of south Asian residents with British Commonwealth citizenship just ninety days to leave the

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[31] The consequences of this legislative and administrative failure only became clear in the late 2010s, long after most of those who passed the 1971 Act had left politics. The failure of policymakers to anticipate that long-term resident migrants with full residence rights might at some future point need documentary evidence of their status was an oversight that proved to be disastrous decades later. Many such Commonwealth citizens, with decades of residence in Britain, found themselves unable to satisfy the Home Office of their legal status in the late 2010s, when new status check processes were introduced by the 'Hostile Environment' policies introduced by the Conservative government in 2012 and 2014. The result was often traumatic experiences at the hands of immigration officials, who treated these elderly Commonwealth citizens as illegal migrants subject to full enforcement and deportation procedures (see Gentleman 2019).

country.[32] While the previous Labour government had abandoned Kenyan Asian Commonwealth citizens when they found themselves in a similar position four years earlier, leaving them stateless, Edward Heath opted to uphold the anti-racist and pro-Commonwealth principles espoused by the pre-Powell political elite, in defiance of public opinion and despite vehement opposition from Powell himself. Heath pledged to fully honour the passport rights of Ugandan Asians to settle in Britain. He defended the choice as a matter of principle: '[We have] no choice but to stand by Britain's obligation . . .'[33] A massive airlift was organised to safely remove Ugandan Asian citizens with British passports, and the Heath government pursued an intensive diplomatic effort to ensure those without such passports would find a safe haven in other countries ahead of Amin's deadline.[34]

Nearly 30,000 Ugandan Asian refugees were admitted to Britain in a matter of weeks. The unexpected and rapid arrival of large numbers of ethnic Indian refugee migrants was a scenario likely to provoke an intensely hostile reaction from ethnocentric white voters, and Enoch Powell wasted no time in looking to once again mobilise such sentiments, this time against his own party. Powell led the political campaign against the Ugandan Asians, repeatedly attacking his own government's policy – for example, accusing the Attorney General of 'prostituting his office', for supporting their claims.[35] Heath, like his Labour predecessors, discovered that Powell's speeches were more important than Westminster legislation in driving media headlines and public perceptions on immigration. Although Heath had passed the restrictive IA 1971 just a year earlier, the

[32] Amin's actions were also a reflection of ethnocentric identity politics in action – the black majority in Uganda regarded the south Asian population, which had settled in the country during its time as a British Imperial colony, as an alien and threatening out-group. Much like many of Enoch Powell's white supporters in Britain, many African Ugandans supported removing the 'threat' posed by a racially and culturally distinct migrant minority by expelling the minority group from the country.
[33] *The Times*, 'Mr Heath Takes up Powell's Challenge', 11 October 1972.
[34] Hansen (2000: 197–200).   [35] Schoen (1977).

Ugandan Asians crisis and Powell's renewed anti-immigration campaign turned ethnocentric voters against the Conservatives, who were now seen as being 'soft' on immigration. Heath gained no credit for his restrictive reforms from ethnocentric voters, who instead were now being mobilised against him by one of his own backbenchers.

The consequences of this backlash are clear in the 1974 British Election Study. As we have seen, most voters in 1970 thought Conservative immigration policy was more restrictive than it actually was, thanks to Powell's anti-immigration polemics. Now, with Powell campaigning against his own party for being too soft on immigration, public sentiment swung the other way, as Figure 4.5 illustrates. The share of voters who thought the Conservatives favoured the strictest migration control policies – repatriation or a total halt to immigration – fell from 58 per cent in 1970 to 36 per cent in 1974. Conversely, the share who
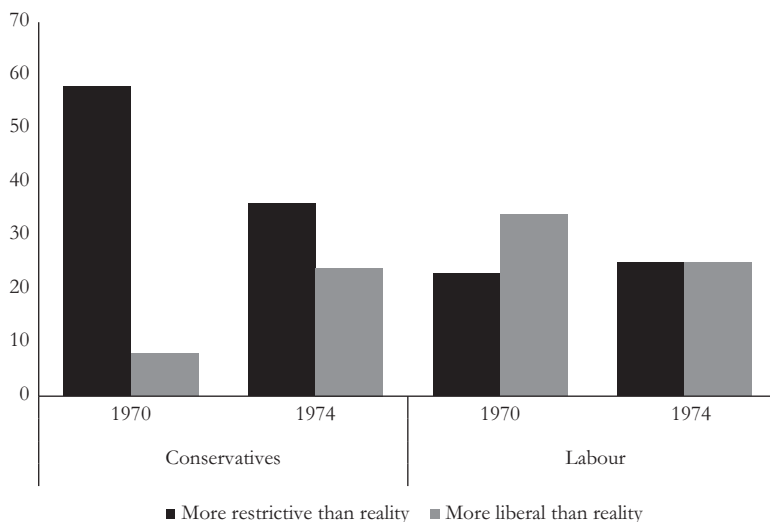

Figure 4.5 Prevalence of misperceptions about Conservative and Labour migration policies in 1970 and 1974 (percentages)

Source: British Election Studies, 1970 and 1974. See note to Figure 4.4 for details of coding.

thought Heath's Tories favoured large-scale new migration or uncontrolled entry of migrants – options never entertained by the Heath government – tripled from 8 per cent to 24 per cent. Meanwhile, the share of the electorate believing Labour favoured liberal migration policies fell, despite the party's strong support for Heath's stance on the Ugandan Asians and its opposition to the IA 1971, particularly the discriminatory ancestry rules.[36] The Conservatives' electoral advantage on immigration restriction largely disappeared, even as the Conservatives' immigration policy shifted in a restrictive direction. What Powell gave, Powell could take away. With the electorate again overwhelmingly in favour of strong restrictions on migration (73 per cent favoured repatriation or a total halt to migration in 1974), the loss of this restrictive reputation was costly. The Conservatives' 1970 lead among the most ethnocentric voters disappeared in 1974. While immigration was far from the only issue on the agenda in the turbulent mid-1970s, it is quite possible that Edward Heath's principled act of generosity to the Ugandan Asians, and Enoch Powell's fiery criticism of this generosity, contributed to the Conservatives' narrow defeat in the two elections of 1974.

After Powell: the consolidation of an identity politics divide

With the Conservatives no longer perceived as committed to immigration control after the Ugandan Asian crisis, space opened up for new parties to exploit ethnocentric sentiments. In another parallel with the politics of the second wave of immigration, the radical right surged in the late 1970s by attracting identity conservative voters who had lost faith in the

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[36] Hansen (2000: 195–7). A number of liberal Conservative MPs also opposed Heath's migration legislation for failing to resolve the problem of stateless Kenyan Asians created by the previous Labour government, led by Bow Group chief Michael Howard, who decades later as Home Secretary would find himself on the receiving end of liberal criticism for his restrictive approach to refugee migration.

government's ability to control immigration. The extreme right and openly racist National Front, emerging as Britain's fourth largest party in the mid-1970s,[37] foreshadowed the later turn to the BNP[38] and UKIP following a similar loss of public faith in the government of the late 2000s.[39] In both cases, Conservative leaders sought to win back migration sceptics with new and stronger promises of control – David Cameron's 'tens of thousands' pledge and Theresa May's 'red line' on EU free movement echoing the earlier bid by new Conservative opposition leader Margaret Thatcher to win back ethnocentric voters in the late 1970s.

Thatcher, elected as leader in 1975, was influenced both by Enoch Powell's[40] views and by the public reaction to them. She recognised from the outset the disruptive political power of immigration, and the rewards the issue could provide to politicians able to articulate and mobilise ethnocentric anxieties. Her reflections on the issue in her memoirs are worth quoting at length:

> I felt no sympathy for rabble rousers, like the National Front, who sought to exploit race . . . At the same time, large-scale New Commonwealth immigration over the years had transformed large areas of Britain in a way which the indigenous population found hard to accept. It is one thing for a well-heeled politician to preach the merits of tolerance on a public platform before returning to a comfortable home in a tranquil road in one of the more respectable suburbs, where

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[37] Husbands (1983).   [38] Ford and Goodwin (2010); Wilks-Heeg (2009).

[39] Apart from the difference in the extremism of the anti-immigration option, with the National Front being more openly racist and violent than the later radical right parties, another interesting contrast is that while the National Front did best in London, which was the centre of migration settlement but also still had numerically dominant ethnocentric white populations in the 1970s, by the time UKIP and the BNP arrived on the political scene in the 2000s and 2010s London was far more ethnically diverse and identity liberal, and the ethnocentric appeals of the radical right only gained traction in a few districts on the fringes of the city such as Barking and Dagenham, where white school leavers were still a locally dominant group (Harris 2012; Kaufmann 2017).

[40] See, for example, Schofield (2013).

house prices ensure him the exclusiveness of apartheid without the stigma. It is quite another for poorer people, who cannot afford to move, to watch their neighbourhoods changing and the value of their house falling. Those in such a situation need to be reassured rather than patronised . . . The failure to articulate the sentiments of ordinary people . . . had left the way open to the extremists.[41]

Thatcher's thoughts bring together several aspects of the identity politics conflict over immigration. She, like Powell before her, was aware of the strong anti-racism norm among the political elite but, again like Powell, she did not believe such norms were shared by most voters. She attacked those propagating such norms as hypocritical – demanding acceptance of migrants while living in areas unaffected by their arrival – and defended the hostile sentiments expressed by those who she argued had to live with the disruptive consequences of migration. This account, written in 1995 and reflecting on political disputes from decades earlier, seeks both to legitimate the political mobilisation of ethnocentric sentiments and to undermine those who sought to stigmatise such mobilisation as a violation of anti-racism norms. It could easily have been delivered by a UKIP politician or Brexit campaigner defending ethnocentric opposition to mass migration twenty years later.

Mrs Thatcher's sympathy with the ethnocentric sentiments of identity conservative voters was also evident when she was leader of the opposition. In a widely reported interview with Granada's 'World in Action' programme in January 1978, Thatcher expressed sympathy with British voters who were 'rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture'.[42] This had an immediate impact on public perceptions, just as Powell's interventions had ten years earlier. The share of voters who regarded the Conservatives as most likely to stop immigration, which had languished at around 30–35 per cent since the Ugandan Asians crisis,

[41] Thatcher (1995).   [42] Thatcher (1978).

jumped to over 50 per cent after the 'World in Action' interview, and remained at this level through to the 1979 election.[43] In the British Election Study conducted after the 1979 election this figure rose to over 60 per cent, including two-thirds of Conservative identifiers and more than half of Labour identifiers – the highest figures recorded since the studies commenced in 1964. Thatcher, like Powell, thus proved able to shift public views of the Conservatives' immigration stance by employing strong restrictionist rhetoric, aligning herself with the concerns of electorally dominant identity conservatives. Unlike Powell, however, either due to her more careful tone or her more elevated position as Conservative leader, she was able to activate such ethnocentric sentiments without suffering a significant political cost from violating elite anti-racism norms.[44]

While Thatcher made no specific policy commitments in her 1978 intervention, once elected she moved quickly to enact fundamental reform of British citizenship and immigration policy, abandoning the framework established in the 1948 BNA and replacing it with a new conception of citizenship and national identity based on heritage. The 1981 British Nationality Act (BNA 1981) not only severed Britain's citizenship links with its former colonies, it also ended an even longer-standing citizenship principle – the *ius soli* principle under which, since

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[43] Figures from the historical polling database compiled by Will Jennings. An average of 34 per cent of voters rated the Conservatives as 'the party who can best handle the problem of immigration' in eight polls conducted between July 1974 and the 'World in Action' interview in January 1978. This figure rose to an average of 52 per cent in the ten polls conducted between the interview's transmission and the May 1979 election.

[44] Such norms, however, exerted an important influence on Thatcher's subsequent approach to the issue. Pressured, in particular by William Whitelaw, an important and powerful ally, she was successfully persuaded not to make similarly provocative statements on migration and race in subsequent election campaigns. Immigration did not feature at all in the 1983 and 1987 Conservative election campaigns and received only brief attention in the 1992 campaign led by Thatcher's successor John Major (Hansen 2000: 211). Strong support from identity liberal cabinet colleagues was also an important factor in the retention of largely unrestricted family migration rights for settled migrants throughout the Thatcher–Major governments.

1914, children born on British territory had an automatic right to British citizenship. Following the BNA 1981, children born in Britain to non-citizen residents have to register to obtain British citizenship, and can acquire citizenship only if they can meet residence or parental citizenship conditions.[45] The provision, like the IA 1971, stored up problems for later, as there remained a widespread assumption that people born in Britain automatically acquired British citizenship,[46] and many migrant families therefore made no effort to compile the documentation needed to secure their children's citizenship rights later on. Children born to non-citizen parents after BNA 1981 came into force, who have lived in Britain their whole lives, have often been shocked to discover once they turned eighteen that the British state regarded them as migrants who could be subject to Home Office control and exclusion from some public services.[47]

The radical reforms of the BNA 1981, and the subsequent sustained drop in migration to Britain,[48] cemented the links between ethnocentric attitudes and Conservative support which Mrs Thatcher had re-forged.[49] As Figure 4.6 illustrates, those expressing ethnocentric attitudes were consistently more likely to also express a Conservative partisan identity throughout the

[45] All those with right of abode in Britain under the terms of the IA 1971 were also granted British citizenship in the BNA 1981 – though, as in 1971, no effort was made to document and officially confirm these newly granted rights, so another critical opportunity to provide early Commonwealth migrants with the paperwork they needed to guarantee their citizenship rights was missed.

[46] For example, Professor J. Merion Thomas, a consultant NHS surgeon, claimed in the *Spectator* in 2013 that 'there are stories of heavily pregnant women arriving in the UK because childbirth qualifies for emergency care and the child would be British, thereby providing the mother with residency rights' (Thomas 2013). Professor Thomas called such stories 'anecdotal but almost certainly true', even though this scenario had been legally impossible for over thirty years at the time he was writing.

[47] See, for example, Bawdon (2014); Bulman (2018).

[48] This drop was not solely due to the BNA 1981 reforms, though they likely played a role. Britain suffered a severe recession in the early 1980s and experienced mass unemployment for most of the decade, making it a less attractive destination for migrants looking for work.
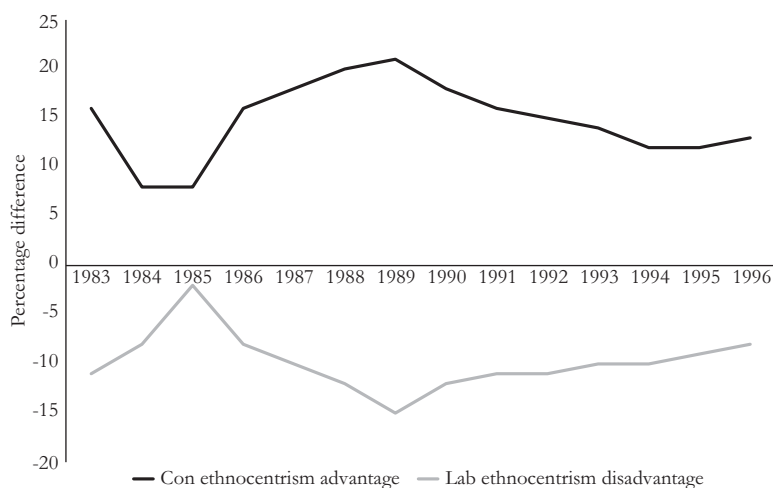
[49] Ford (2019b).

Figure 4.6 Conservative advantage and Labour disadvantage in party identification among ethnocentric voters

Source: British Social Attitudes, 1983–1996. Measure of ethnocentrism is 'Do you think of yourself as prejudiced against people of other races?' The same pattern is found with other measures of ethnocentrism (see the Online Appendix: www.cambridge.org/Brexitland).

Thatcher–Major governments of the 1980s and 1990s, a link which holds even after adjusting for the other demographic and attitudinal differences between ethnocentric voters and others.[50] Conversely, those expressing racial prejudice or other ethnocentric attitudes, such as opposition to immigration, were consistently less likely to hold Labour partisanship throughout this period. Meanwhile, the rapidly growing ethnic minority electorate showed a strong and persistent alignment to Labour, reflecting the campaigns against them and their parents by Powell and Thatcher, along with Labour's passage of race relations legislation. This powerful and lasting alignment began to tilt previously competitive or Conservative-leaning seats in

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[50] See the Online Appendix for details: www.cambridge.org/Brexitland

England's largest cities decisively towards Labour as ethnic minority populations grew.[51]

Mobilisation on the left: entrenching anti-racism norms

Both Conservative and Labour governments passed restrictive immigration reforms during the first wave, some with black and Asian migration as the clear focus of policymakers' attention. Unhappiness with this approach was widespread among identity liberal elites and resulted in a counter-mobilisation of those most strongly committed to anti-racist norms. Identity liberals successfully pressed Labour into passing a series of Acts writing anti-racist norms into law, through pioneering race relations legislation. This legislation steadily expanded to cover more areas of life, including housing, employment and public services, and the anti-racism political debate moved from simply outlawing racially motivated discrimination to enabling fast-growing ethnic minority groups to retain many of their customs and accommodating their religious requirements. As the political and policy debate moved towards cultural recognition and providing ethnic groups with special exemptions from usual legislation (such as wearing motorcycle helmets by Sikhs[52]), Britain became one of the European leaders in implementing multiculturalism policies.[53] Unlike many continental

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[51] For example, when Bernie Grant was elected by Tottenham as one of the first four self-identifying Black and Minority Ethnic MPs in 1987, he won 43 per cent of the vote, giving him an eight-point majority over the Conservatives on 35 per cent. The Conservative vote went into a steep and continuous decline thereafter. Thirty years later, his successor David Lammy won 82 per cent of the Tottenham vote, giving him a seventy-point majority over the Conservatives, who won just 11 per cent.

[52] The Motor Cycles (Protective Helmets) Regulations 1998; for discussion of the political and philosophical implications see Barry (2000).

[53] One of the first of these multicultural policy indices, MCP, is available at: www .queensu.ca/mcp/home. The only European country classified as more multicultural in the 1980s and 1990s was Sweden (and the Netherlands has the same score as the UK).

counterparts, but similar to the United States, British law was early to recognise indirect, as well as direct, discrimination (1976 Race Relations Act). Crucially, the choice of dealing with discrimination through the civil, and not the criminal, justice processes has meant that the burden of proof in discrimination cases has been lighter, and made it easier to raise a complaint. This choice was directly modelled on the US system of legislation,[54] and the early entrenchment of anti-racism norms in law has played an important role shaping the subsequent path of policy- and law-making in the area of race in Britain.[55]

The emergence of a distinct identity liberal political coalition was also catalysed by events in the decades between the two waves of immigration. One flashpoint was the racially motivated murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993. This case was subject to a formal inquiry headed by Sir William Macpherson, instigated in 1997 by the Labour government following a sustained and broad-based public and media campaign mobilising anti-racism norms.[56] The Macpherson report received wide press and public attention and a generally sympathetic response. It was influential in prompting further legal protections[57] against what Macpherson called 'institutional racism',[58] and a sustained campaign, unusually led by the socially conservative tabloid

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[54] The process of how this legislation came to be inspired by the US is described in great detail in Bleich (2003).

[55] Bleich (2003).

[56] One prominent and unusual supporter of the campaign was the *Daily Mail*, a newspaper that has typically shown strong sympathies to ethnocentric anxieties about threatening migrants and minorities. The involvement of the *Daily Mail* both illustrated and helped to accelerate the growing reach of anti-racism norms.

[57] The 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act obliged public bodies, including the police, to promote good race relations; other changes included a new definition of a racist act, which increased the police's responsibility to investigate crimes as racist, the creation of an Independent Police Complaints Commission, and introducing diversity targets in police recruitment; in addition, criminal law's existing rules on double jeopardy were relaxed in murder cases in which new evidence came to light, in the 2003 Criminal Justice Act.

[58] Macpherson described this as 'collective failure of an organisation to provide a professional service . . . through unwitting prejudice, ignorance,

press, to prosecute and jail Lawrence's suspected murderers.[59] Often dubbed the 'murder that changed Britain', the tragic death of Stephen Lawrence not only further entrenched legal protections against discrimination, but also catalysed the spread of anti-racism norms through society and politics. From mainstream news media revealing and scrutinising institutional racism in the police, Home Office and political parties, to parties across the political spectrum naming tackling racism as a key policy priority,[60] the case highlighted the potential for counter-mobilisation of anti-racism norms in response to extreme expressions of ethnocentric hostility. Although, as we showed in the previous chapter, the public do not always rally behind these anti-racism norms, by the 1990s they were no longer a preserve of the political elites, as they had been during the first wave of migration.

Conclusion: why did liberal immigration policies persist for so long?

Given the large majorities opposed to black and Asian migration throughout the first wave, the puzzle posed by this period is not that conflicts over immigration arose, but that relatively liberal rules governing Commonwealth migration were maintained for so long. British policymakers in 1948 granted a huge portion of the world's population rights to reside and work in Britain. It took them fourteen years to begin restricting these rights, and thirty-five years to completely curtail them. Vestiges of this liberal citizenship regime remain even today – citizens of Commonwealth countries (and Ireland) retain the right to vote and stand in British general elections from the day they arrive in Britain. This is a right very few new migrants enjoy in other

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thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people' (Macpherson 1999).

[59] Nineteen years after the murder, two of the perpetrators were finally found guilty of the crime and are at the time of writing serving their sentences.

[60] Uberoi and Modood (2013).

developed democracies, and a right not shared by other migrants to Britain, who cannot vote in general elections without first obtaining British citizenship.

Three overlapping factors explain this persistence. The first is legal and institutional path dependence. The 1948 choice to grant Commonwealth residents citizenship rights acted as a constraint on political elites who were reluctant to ignore or unilaterally abandon the obligations the citizenship regime created. Policymakers' refusal to write discrimination into law by creating different and unequal classes of citizens was a key factor delaying the introduction of Commonwealth migration restrictions in the 1950s, and the obligations of the state to all citizens were invoked by Edward Heath to justify his decision to assist the Ugandan Asians in 1973. We see similar path dependence emerging again some fifty years later following the EU A8 enlargement of 2004. The decision to align Britain with a large international structure – this time the EU – once again led the government of the day to forgo immigration restrictions and triggered an unforeseen influx of migrants that was opposed by ethnocentric voters. Once the decision was made, political elites again felt themselves bound by legal and normative obligations to respect citizenship rights, this time the free movement rights of EU citizens, limiting their ability to respond to rising public concern (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The second factor was foreign policy. Britain's political elites regarded close political, economic and diplomatic links with the Commonwealth as a key policy goal. With the sun finally setting on the British Empire, policymakers saw integration and cooperation across a post-Imperial 'Anglosphere' as the best way to renew Britain's place in the world. Immigration control was therefore resisted by political elites as likely to cause frictions with Britain's Commonwealth partners in the short run and weaken the bonds between Britain and its former colonies in the long run. Their successors forty years later were similarly reluctant to make a major push for reform to migration in the EU because, once again, this conflicted with central foreign policy goals. In both periods, political elites saw domestic

disquiet over immigration as an acceptable price to pay for maintaining close connections with key international partners.

Finally, elite opposition to immigration control was not just a matter of policy constraint or expediency. It also reflected deeply held and widely shared elite social norms sanctioning racial prejudice and discrimination. The political classes of the 1950s–1970s included many men who had personally fought in a global war against a racist, genocidal dictatorship. Veterans of that war abhorred the racism they associated with their Nazi adversaries, and those perceived to be mobilising similar dark forces in domestic politics were ostracised. Thus, Peter Griffiths, who ran an openly racist constituency campaign in 1964, was dubbed a 'Parliamentary leper' by the prime minister following his election, and never served in ministerial office. Enoch Powell, the first senior politician to mobilise ethnocentric opposition to migration, correctly anticipated that it would end his career in the Conservative leadership, but perhaps did not anticipate that it would also end several long-standing friendships with Conservative colleagues. Even Margaret Thatcher, the archetypal dominant and domineering prime minister, was successfully discouraged from public interventions on migration by the normative objections of Cabinet allies.

While such social norms did not, in the end, prevent politicians in either party from introducing and then extending racially discriminatory migration controls, they were still consequential. Anti-racism norms acted as a brake on the political mobilisation of hostile public sentiment by the mainstream parties, and slowed and diluted the policy responses to this ethnocentric sentiment. Normative concerns also motivated Labour politicians to balance anti-immigration legislation with equalities legislation, entrenching anti-racism norms in law. And such norms acted as a sign of things to come. Racial equality was already a core personal value for university graduates in this period and anti-racism norms would therefore only grow in political significance as university expansion dramatically increased the share of graduates in the electorate.

The BNA 1981, which came into force in 1983, brought the political story of the first wave of immigration to a close. This

was a complex story of grand imperial ideals and unintended consequences, of noble stands and messy compromises, as governments of both parties wrestled with an issue that divided them internally, and where their political and ethical instincts often strongly diverged from the strongly anti-migration stance of the electorate. Yet the political legacy of these conflicts was simpler: a clear and lasting divide in the parties' reputations on immigration and diversity. The Conservatives, thanks to the strident and long-remembered stances of Powell and Thatcher in particular, became seen as the opponents of ethnic diversity and supporters of tight immigration control. The Labour Party, despite inconsistent and sometimes unprincipled positions on immigration, emerged as the party of identity liberals, migrants and minorities – in part, thanks to their passage of race relations legislation, but also simply by being the main opposition to the party of Powell and Thatcher, and thus the only viable alternative for those threatened by Conservative mobilisation of white ethnocentric hostility. This partisan alignment over race and ethnocentrism was still in place when immigration once again began to disrupt politics in the 2010s and, as we shall see, it played an important role in shaping the political impact of these new disruptions.